

**Education Cabinet**

# **Kentucky to Observe National Celebrate ASL! at Folklife Festival in Frankfort**

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FRANKFORT, Ky. – Though Deaf Awareness Week can trace its roots back more than three decades, this year the celebration adds a new twist: national Celebrate ASL!.

Celebrate ASL!, an observance of the World Federation of the Deaf's (WFD) International Day of Sign Languages, will be celebrated by the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) on Friday, Sept. 21 at the Kentucky Folklife Festival in Frankfort with a pair of presentations about deaf culture.

The national Celebrate ASL! event will be on Friday, Sept. 28, will be on the steps of Chapel Hall at Gallaudet University in Washington DC. The event celebrates the National Association of the Deaf's stance that American Sign Language (ALS) is the natural language of the American deaf community. Communities nationwide have planned festivities for International Day of Sign Languages, as well as for the weekends leading up to and following the day.

"I love the quote I saw somewhere that said, 'Deaf people are tired of being reminded about their hearing loss,' and it's true," said Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins, executive director of KCDHH and president of the National Association of the Deaf. "We want to celebrate our history, our culture and our sign language."

International Day of Sign Languages arose from a resolution passed with overwhelming support during the 2007 World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in Madrid, Spain. Celebrate ASL! is

part of the objectives set forth by the congress, including advancement of human rights through sign languages.

Deaf Awareness Week is celebrated the last full week of September each year in honor of the first World Congress of the Deaf, held that same week in 1951. This year, Deaf Awareness Week is celebrated from Sunday, Sept. 23 through Saturday, Sept. 29.

More than 28 million Americans suffer from some degree of hearing loss, with that number expected to double by 2030. That figure represents more than 9 percent of the total U.S. population. Kentucky ranks third nationally per capita in number of people suffering from hearing loss.

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The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has spent a quarter century providing effective and efficient leadership, education, advocacy and programs to eliminate barriers and to meet the social, economic, cultural and intellectual needs of deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians. For more information, contact:

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